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VIREOS DESERVE ENCOURAGEMENT

During the summer almost anywhere in the United States at least one species of vireo, and usually more than one, is to be found flitting about in the trees or shrubbery. In the East and Central regions the common species is the red-eyed vireo, but the white-eyed, warbling, and yellow-throated vireos also are abundant. The Philadelphia, blue-headed, hutton, and Bell vireos are more or less widely distributed. As with other common species of birds, the question as to whether or not vireos are beneficial is legitimately raised, and to answer it, the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has made a study of their food habits, by examining the stomach contents of a great many of these birds.

The conclusions reached are set forth in a recent report (Department Bulletin, 1355), "Food Habits of the Vireos: A Family of Insectivorous Birds." The food of the several vireos is shown to be very similar though sometimes varying in proportions. Most of the insects eaten are either neutral or definitely injurious in their economic relations, and may be placed on the credit side of the

account of these birds. All vireos are especially fond of caterpillars. Scale insects are a notable item of vireo food, and other tree pests are freely eaten. Many destructive weevils were found in the stomachs examined, including such forms as the clover-leaf, clover-root, cotton-boll, and nut weevils, the plum curculio and bark beetles. Vireos also destroy ants and grasshoppers. Useful insects taken by the vireos include some of the hymenopterans, predacious bugs, and beetles, among which are ladybird beetles, which are almost uniformly beneficial. Although it is regretted that vireos consume as many ladybirds as the evidence indicates, yet they also devour many of the pests attacked by the ladybirds, which must, in part excuse them. As fruit-eaters the vireos are practically harmless.

Those interested in the bulletin may obtain a copy, while the supply lasts, by writing to the United States Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

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